

Developing Western Australia's Relationship with Japan

One of the great pleasures of my role is developing the State's relationship with other countries. As most West Australians would be aware, our economic relationship with Japan has contributed strongly to the success of the State economy. Over the decades, this relationship has broadened with strong cultural and political links developing. On a personal basis, I visited Japan in 1984 as a member of the Rotary Group Study Exchange Team from WA to the Hyogo Prefecture. This fantastic experience gave me a great insight into the Japanese Nation and its people. I enjoyed my experience in Japan so much that I returned with my family for a visit with some of the families I met back in 1986.

Reflecting the strength of that relationship, I attended several events with representatives of the Japanese Government over the past few months. Prior to the Winter Recess, representatives from the both houses including myself, attended a dinner with the Japanese Consul-General, Mr Torao Sato. Mr Sato and I discussed means of deepening the relationship that has developed between the West Australian Parliament and the Kansai Region of Japan.

The Hyogo Prefecture - Western Australia Sister State relationship was established with the aim to further enhance relations between the two regions in the respective fields of politics, economics, society and culture, as well as to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between Parliamentarians. In early August, I attended the Opening of the Hyogo Cultural Centre in City Beach. The Hyogo Cultural Centre aims to promote Japanese language, culture and exchange by providing a large resource library and conducting various seminars, workshops and activities to cater for all age groups and interests. The Centre is important here in Perth to continue to strengthen the Sister-State relationship between Western Australia and the Hyogo Prefecture.



Japanese Tatami Room, at the Hyogo Cultural Centre.

Hyogo Cultural Centre's main attraction is the Japanese room with tatami mats and shoji screens. This room is utilised to display seasonal items or carry out various Japanese traditional performances such as Tea ceremony, Koto, and Japanese dance.



Picture: The President entertaining the Delegation Members from the Hyogo Prefectural Assembly at Afternoon Tea with the Clerk of the Legislative Council, Mr Malcolm Peacock.

I was also invited to the launch of “*An Enduring Friendship, Western Australia and Japan - Past, Present and Future*” which was held by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Hon Grant Woodhams MLA.

The launch featured a collection of major scholarly essays and reflections which celebrated and commemorated the relations between Japan and Western Australia dating from the period of colonial settlement of Western Australia through to their current influence on the West Australian economy. It was edited by David Black and Sachiko Sone, who both spoke on their contributions to the book. The Launch by the Premier was held at Parliament House and attended by Members of the both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly.



Picture: The President, Hon Barry House with the Consul-General, Mr Torao Sato (left), the Speaker, the Hon Grant Woodlams, and Mr Masaru Yaota, Vice Speaker of Hyogo Prefectural Assembly.



Picture: The President with Professor David Black, one of the Editors and contributors to the book.